cluding Andhra Pradesh. As a part of this effort, the Board has established a Regional Research Station at R. V. Nagar, extension centres at Chintapalli (two) and Araku Vallley, Regional Office at Vishakapatnam and a coffee demonstration farm at Minumuluru.

Trade Gap

872. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the trade-gap has been consistently widening;

(b) details of trade gap as on 31st January, 1995 and the corresponding figure for the same period last year;

(c) factors responsible for widening of trade gap, particularly since the recent past despite substantial improvement in the benefit package with a view to boosting India's export, during the period; and

(d) what measures have been taken/contemplated by Government to narrow the trade gap gradually?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Trade deficit estimated at US $1837.41 million during April-January, 1994-95 though higher than US $581.68 millior during April—January, 1993-94 is lower than US $3596.39 million during corresponding period in 19992-93.

(c) Trade gap has widened in the current year due to increase in Non-POL imports consequent upon increased growth of industry, and import-linked exports considering that major part of imports is still constituted by raw materials, intermediates, inputs and capital goods.

(d) Trade deficit is within the manageable limit considering the present level of foreign exchange reserved.

Auction of tea gardens of TTCI

873. SHRI RATNA BAHADUR RAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tenders were invited for auction of tea gardens under the T.T.C.I.; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) SBI Capital Markets Ltd., who have been engaged for finalising sale of the tea gardens vested in TTCI, have invited tenders asking for expression of interest/financial offer from parties who are interested in purchase of four gardens owned by TTCI viz. Paghok Tear Estate, Vah Tokvar Tea Estate, Looksan Tea Estate and Potong Tea Estate. Similar Tender for Pathini Tea Estate is in process of finalisation.

Targets for exports

874. DR. B. B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1780 given in the Rajya Sabha on 19-12-94 and state:

(a) the target set for export during 1994-95;

(b) how this has been achieved; and

(c) details of steps taken to increase exports especially in the Rupee Payment Area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No export target has been set for 1994-95. However, Trade and Industry hve been exhorted to achieve export growth of 25 per cent during the current year. The Eight Plan (1992-97) envisages an export target of 13.6 per cent annum in value terms (at 1991-92 prices) during the Plan period.

(b) India's export during April-January, 1994-95, the latest period for which such data are available were valued at US $ 20871 million (Rs. 65483 crores) indicating a growth rate of 17.3 per cent.

(c) Export promotion is a continuous process and steps are taken to boost exports in consultation with trade and industry. New bilateral framework agreements on trade and economic cooperation are being signed with the emergent countries of the former Soviet Union and East Europe and rupee payment track is being substituted by standard hard currency agreements. Exports to Russia are being facilitated through debt repayment mechanism.

National strategy on exports

875. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are in the process of evolving a national strategy on exports which would involve engaging a much larger percentage of the population in exports; and

(b) if so, what is the status of the formulation of such a strategy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The Export and Import policy contains the basic strategy on exports. There is broad consensus on the policy. With the establishment of a larger number of units in the EPZs, a larger number of export-oriented units and the participation of a larger number of merchants/manufacturers in exporting goods produced in India, a larger proportion of the population will be involved in the export drive. Changes in Trade policy are made from time to time in response to changes in the international and national economic situations. Active involvement of the State Governments in export promotion efforts would also lead to larger people's participation.

Setback to prawn exports

876. SHRI P. UPENDRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether exports of prawn from India have suffered a setback recently due disease in aqua-farm; and

(b) what steps Government is taking to remedy this situation and maintain the exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Export of prawns in the period (April-January) 1994-1995 increased by 33.66 per cent in value terms as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. There has however, been some loss of production owing to outbreak of disease in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh and in some pockets of Tamilnadu.

(b) The remedial measures contemplated inter-alia include:

(I) Regulation through legislation of prawn farming by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

(II) Advising prawn farmers to have a crop holiday up to end of May 1995 and dry the pond bottom for 2-3 months.

(III) Incorporation of an Environmental Management and Monitoring Plan.

(IV) Advising farmers to adopt environmental management systems.

Gearing up export machinery to maximise exports

877. SHRI HIPHEI:

MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any steps have been taken to gear up the export machinery to maximise exports in 1994-95;